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Montecito Union grad Tara Lengsfelder (aka Tara L. Nicole) is now an officially published author of “Dancing In The Rain: The Final Cut”

It’s All About Books

Twenty-one-year-old Tara Nicole Lengsfelder (writing under the name Tara L. Nicole) is a former Montecito Union student whose first book, “Dancing In The Rain: The Final Cut,” was published in December ’06 by UK’s Pneuma Springs publishing house. Writing is nothing new for the Brandeis student; “I’ve been writing since I was old enough to hold a pen,” she reveals as we sit outside Pierre LaFond during a recent conversation. Tara gives credit to her parents, John and Janet Lengsfelder, whom she says always encouraged her creativity. John is a film & video producer; Janet is a marriage & family therapist in private practice and R.N. at Cottage Hospital.

Tara also credits a triumvirate of Montecito Union School teachers: Sue Carmody, Julie Bennett and Jackie Hammer. “All three of them became my friends and mentors,” Tara says, adding that at MUS, “we did so many writing projects, and poetry projects; they’re really good about that. In all their classes, we wrote a lot of fables and stuff. In Sue Carmody’s class, we did a whole book of poetry anthologies.” As an eighth-grader, Tara (who also paints and plays the oboe) wrote and starred in a reading of her own one-act play – “A Race Not Yet To Be Won” – under the aegis of the Young Playwrights Program at Dos Pueblos High School.

Tara was born and raised in Montecito and attended Monroe, Montecito Union, Santa Barbara Junior High, and is a 2003 graduate of San Marcos High School. She majors in economics and business – “completely unrelated to the writing thing” – and will receive her degree from Brandeis University in Boston in May.

When I point out that she discovered she had an affinity for writing at an early age, yet majored in econ and business, she explains:

“I always thought ‘econ and business, that’s practical, and that’s good,’” she says, smiling. “I didn’t know what I wanted to do,” she continues, “so I thought business and economics, if nothing else, would serve me well. It would teach me how to manage my own money no matter what I end up doing. Even now, in marketing my book, I’m relying on everything I learned in my business courses. I always thought I was going to go to Wall Street, but I’m not doing that... yet,” she adds.

“Yet?”

“I’m looking at doing human relations for a finance firm or somewhere in that area where I can use economics or business, but I really want to work with people,” she answers, adding that she loves watching the stock market but that, “it’s always just going to be money to me. If I work with the people who work with the money, it’s more human.”

Tara grew up in a creative family. Her grandfather – Hans Lengsfelder – was a playwright. She says he “only produced one or two plays in the United States,” but was popular in Austria (before World War II). Both her parents are creative too, she says.

The young author classifies “The Final Cut” as “a coming of age story.” She says it is about finding one’s inner strength, and the idea that outside sources can be there – or not. “It’s really about finding that love for yourself to get you through those tough teenage years. I come from the most loving and supporting family, but even they weren’t able to help me through this. I really had to learn how to do it for myself and how to rely on myself.”

Growing up, Tara and her sister (Savannah, three and a half years older, is a legislative aide for U.S. Senator Russ Feingold [D-Wisconsin] in Washington D.C.) wrote plays together. “We were brought up to think if we needed to process something,” Tara says, “we should write it in our journals.”

The book began as Tara was going through what she calls “a very hard time,” and she would sit down and write as if it were a journal entry. “It was easier to write it in the third person,” she recalls, “so I could make my story more real by writing it down and turning it into fiction, changing it, altering it. That’s how it all started, but at some point I read what I wrote and went ‘Wow,’ I could add a character to this and make it a compelling story. It wasn’t just me anymore.”

In June 2006, Tara finished the book – a sophisticated mix of “journal entries,” third-person observations that move the plot along, and crisp dialogue – and immediately went online and began sending enquiries to publishers.

“They asked for excerpts, so I sent them excerpts,” she says. The first group of publishers she sent excerpts to asked to see the entire thing and because she was in Ireland at the time (having spent two semesters abroad), she sent it to Irish and UK publishers. Pneuma Springs agreed to publish “The Final Cut,” but advised her that, “the only hitch is that you are going to have to market it in the states.”

Which she is doing.

She is looking for a U.S. distributor, since her UK publisher has all the publishing rights. Tara says the ideal reader is a junior high student, but she believes therapists working with teenagers will find interest in it, because it tackles tougher subjects, such as kids that try to harm themselves.

Locally, she has met with limited success so far. Read 'n Post told her to 'check back' with them in the summer, as they had no room for another local author at the moment, and are not taking in new inventory. Tara plans to "stop in at Tecolote," and says she is doing her best to get it picked up by Borders and Barnes & Noble, but "that it's a lot of paperwork, and they have to review it and stuff."

Tara is already working on her second book and has applied for a two-year "Teach For America" program that requires her to teach (for pay, at a teacher's salary) in a low-income area; at the end of the two-year period,

she'll receive her teaching credential.

She is also looking for human relations positions at finance firms.

"Beyond that, I don't know," she laughs.

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